

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 809
USMISSION GEVEVA IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
K/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY 2710

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: REFUGEE ACCOMMODATION CRISIS IN HONG KONG

REF: HONG KONG 7276

1. ANOTHER VIETNAMESE JUNK WITH 34 REFUGEES ON BOARD ARRIVED HONG KONG JUNE 9. HONG KONG IMMIGRATION DEPT (HKID) HAS NOT GRANTED THESE REFUGEES TEMPORARY ASYLUM AND THIS JUNK WILL WAIT IN HONG KONG WATERS ALONG WITH THE TWO WHICH ARRIVED JUNE 8. THERE IS NOW TOTAL OF 95 REFUGEES ON THREE JUNKS WAITING FOR TEMPORARY ASYLUM HERE AS RESULT OF LACK OF ACCOMMODATIONS.

2. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT NUMBER OF BOAT REFUGEES COMING TO HONG KONG WILL BE HIGH. THE 175 ETHNIC CHINESE WHO ARRIVED JUNE 7 REPORT THAT SINO-VIETNAMESE ARE DESPERATE TO LEAVE AND MANY ARE PLANNING TO COME TO HONG KONG. IT IS BELIEVED THAT SINO-VIETNAMESE SYNDICATES IN VIETNAM ARE ARRANGING BOAT ESCAPES (THE 175 REFUGEES PAID UP TO \$2,000 EACH AND BOAT WAS FILLED TO OVERCAPACITY) AND HAVE CONNECTIONS WITH HONG KONG FISHING JUNKS. WHILE OVER 100,000 SINO-VIETNAMESE HAVE FLED TO PRC IN RECENT WEEKS, MOST IF NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALL OF THESE WERE FROM NORTH VIETNAM. IT CAN BE ASSUMED THAT SINO-VIETNAMESE FROM SOUTH VIETNAM WOULD PREFER NOT TO GO TO PRC, BUT TO RESETTLE ELSEWHERE.

3. SAMPATKUMAR HAS NOW ADVANCED ARRIVAL HONG KONG FROM KOREA TO NIGHT JUNE 9 AND WILL MEET WITH HONG KONG GOVT OFFICIALS ON JUNE 10 TO DISCUSS ACCOMMODATION CRISIS.

IT MAY BE A TOUGH MEETING SINCE HONG KONG GOVT WILL EXPECT HIM TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE 95 REFUGEES NOT YET GRANTED TEMPORARY ASYLUM. MOST PROBABLY TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THEM CAN BE FOUND, BUT BASIC QUESTION REMAINS ACCOMMODATIONS FOR FUTURE ARRIVALS.

4. OUR UNDERLYING CONCERN ALL ALONG HAS BEEN AD HOC UNHCR APPROACH TO REFUGEE PROBLEMS IN HONG KONG PARTICULARLY LACK OF CONTINGENCY ACCOMMODATION PLANNING WHEN WE DISCUSSED THIS PROBLEM WITH CARPENTER AND SAMPAKUMAR IN PAST, BOTH INSISTED FUTURE ARRIVALS CANNOT BE PROJECTED BUT IF ACCOMMODATION CRISIS DEVELOPED, IT WOULD BE RESOLVED QUICKLY. CARPENTER TOLD US DURING HIS VISIT LAST WEEK THAT ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS HAD BEEN LOCATED (HONG KONG 6955), BUT WHEN CRUNCH CAME, UNHCR FAILED TO DELIVER.

5. WE BELIEVE HONG KONG ACCOMMODATION PROBLEM SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH UNHCR GENEVA WITH REQUEST THAT UNHCR KUALA LUMPUR BE DIRECTED TO RESOLVE EXISTING PROBLEM AND PLAN FOR FUTURE REFUGEE ACCOMMODATION HERE ON URGENT BASIS. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT USE OF MACAU AS A SPILL-OVER ACCOMMODATION FOR REFUGEES IS FEASIBLE AND WOULD RELIEVE PRESSURES BUILDING HERE. WITHOUT UNHCR GENEVA PRODDING, WE FEAR THAT UNDERLYING ACCOMMODATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROBLEM WILL CONTINUE TO DRIFT. NONE OF OUR CONTACTS KNOW HOW LONG SAMPAKUMAR PLANS REMAIN HONG KONG OR WHETHER HE WILL RETURN TO MACAU, BUT HE HAS HOTEL RESERVATIONS ONLY UNTIL JUNE 12. IN UNHCR RESPONSIBILITIES IN MALAYSIA ARE TOO HEAVY WITH LARGE INFLUX THERE OF REFUGEES TO DEVOTE MUCH TIME TO HONG KONG, PERHAPS UNHCR SHOULD CONSIDER REALIGNMENT HONG KONG TO ANOTHER UNHCR OFFICE. SHOESMITH

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